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ANALYSIS OF STUDENT REACTIONS TO COUNSELING.

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OF 174 RESPONDENTS TO A QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED IN SELECTED CLASSES AT RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE, MORE THAN HALF INDICATED THAT THEY HAD CONSIDERED TAKING A PROBLEM TO A COUNSELOR WITHOUT ACTUALLY DOING SO. MOST OF THESE STUDENTS STATED THAT THEY HAD SOLVED THEIR PROBLEMS WITHOUT HELP. AREAS WHICH STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS SUITABLE FOR COUNSELING ASSISTANCE WERE EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL PLANNING, ACADEMIC MATTERS, AND GRADES. FAMILY, PERSONAL-SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS WERE NOT CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE AREAS FOR THE COLLEGE COUNSELOR. THE AUTHOR CONCLUDED (1) THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE COUNSELOR'S FUNCTION, FOR INCREASING THE COUNSELOR'S AVAILABILITY, AND FOR INCREASING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND THE COUNSELOR, AND (2) THAT THE STUDENTS INDICATED A NEED FOR ASSISTANCE IN ASSESSMENT OF ABILITIES AND IN BUILDING OF CONFIDENCE. (WO)

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ANALYSIS OF STUDENT REACTIONS TO COUNSELING

by

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

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ANALYSIS OF ST'DENT REACTIONS TO COUNSELING

The attached questionnaire was administered to 174 students at Riverside City College in the eighth week of the Spring semester, 1962. Of these students 100 were first semester freshmen enrolled in the Psychology 49 classes (Orientation to College), and 74 were from three separate classes as follows: a sophomore Education class, a sophomore Economics class, and a Modern Literature class composed of second semester freshmen and first and second semester sophomores.

Even though some of the questionnaires were not answered completely, all questionnaires were used in the analysis and each separate problem listed by a student was recorded as one incidence.

Question #1 - Within the last year or two, have you thought about going to a school counselor to get help on any kind of a question or problem, and then decided not to do it after all? Check one: Yes ___ No___

	First Semester Freshmen		Upper Classmen		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	42	42	31	41.9	73	41.9
No	57	57	43	58.1	100	57.4
Neither	1	1	0		1	.7

Conclusion:

There seems to be no appreciable difference in percentages of freshmen or upperclassmen at Riverside City College who had recognized having counseling problems, but had not taken them to a counselor for discussion. About 57 percent had not had such problems; 42 percent had.

Question #2 - A. Questions or Problems Students Thought about Taking to Counselors But Did Not.

Problem	Incidence		
	Freshmen	Upperclassmen	Total
1. Academic (Study problems, etc.)	20	3	23
2. Transfer	5	15	20
3. Dropping Classes	4	3	7
4. Personal Problems	4	3	7
5. Vocational Help	3	1	4
6. Ability to do College Work	3	1	4
7. Working Out a Schedule	0	3	3
8. Family	3	0	3
9. Test Interpretation	2	0	2
10. Instructor - Student	2	0	2
11. Change of Major	0	2	0
12. Housing	1	1	2
13. Employment	0	1	1
14. Grade Point Average	0	1	1
	47	34	81

Analysis:

1. The majority of students thought only of discussing problems directly related to school classes and study with the counselor. Out of 81 problems students thought about taking to counselors, only 10 of these were personal or family problems. This is to be expected since academic and school related problems are those most often discussed with high school counselors, and since the school counselor does not have the authority to go far in helping to solve problems of a personal or psychological nature except on a referral basis. On the other hand, this might indicate failure on the part of students to recognize the effect of family or personal problems on school work. Perhaps

as counselors, we could better communicate to students the problems that affect academic success and what steps can be taken to solve them.

2. Of the freshmen who decided not to take academic problems to the counselor, 13 assumed their own responsibility for solving the problem. One student said,

> "One reason was because I felt I could think out the problem by myself. I have found in past experiences though that by not going to the counselor, I had to carry much more of a burden on my shoulders than if I had gone to the counselor and let him help me."

3. One academic problem which seems to bother Junior College students is: Do I have the ability to do college work? Even though the question was not stated directly in too many cases, I felt it was significantly communicated in the questionnaire.

4. A real hesitancy on the part of upperclassmen to bring transfer problems to the counselor led me to break this down further.

a. Obtained Information Elsewhere 5

One student indicated a hostile attitude:
"I got what I considered better advice elsewhere from people I felt better qualified."
One indicated that he had gone directly to the college catalog. The other three were non-committal as to where they had obtained the information.

b. Availability of Counselor

All five indicated that the counselor was too rushed or that it was too hard to get an appointment.

c. Lacked Confidence in Counselor 3

All three students indicated lack of confidence in the counselor's knowledge of the requirements for transfer at the school they had chosen. However, since one stated,

"I wasn't really sure if my counselor could help me,"

it may be again that counselors are not communicating well enough to students.

d. No Reason 2

Question #2 - B. Reasons for Not Going to a Counselor.

Reason	Freshmen	Upperclassmen	Totals
1. Assumed responsibility for solving problem	13	11	24
2. Availability of Counselor	7	8	15
3. Lacked confidence in counselor	3	6	9
4. Fear of wasting counselors' time	5	1	6
5. Did not feel counselor could help	3	1	4
6. Fear of results	2	2	4
7. Counselor wouldn't take enough personal interest	2	2	4
8. Counselor discouraged student from taking wanted classes	2	0	2
9. Didn't like counselor	2	1	3
10. Felt counselor would side with instructor	1	0	1
11. Decided problem did not affect school work	1	1	2
12. Student didn't have time to see Counselor	1	1	2
	42	34	76

Analysis:

1. Many in each group assumed their own responsibility for solving problems themselves. It would be interesting to pursue this question further:

   a. To determine where students are getting the information they need, or to whom they go for help.

   b. To discover how well the problem was solved initially. As one student put it.

      "I am going to try and solve my problem. If I cannot solve it by next semester, I will see my counselor."

2. A significant number in both groups indicated fear of wasting counselor's time, lack of confidence, or availability of counselor as reasons for not taking problems to counselors. One student said

   "I'd be afraid he wouldn't take enough personal interest, and I'd be wasting his time."

Another:

   "Most counselors are helpful and evidence interest, but are too rushed."

And another:

   "If I have a problem, I want to see him right then and get it settled, not wait possibly two weeks for an appointment."

Question #3 - Problems students would not hesitate to discuss with a school counselor.

Problem	Freshmen	Upperclassmen	Totals
1. Concerning classes and study	51	25	76
2. Educational planning	27	30	57
3. Vocational	26	14	40
4. Grades	20	15	35
5. Transfer	13	25	38
6. Student-Instructor relationships	9	5	14
7. Attitudes toward school	5	2	7
8. Family	5	2	7
9. Financial	3	1	4
10. Student Activities	3	1	4
11. Personal-Social	3	2	5
12. Test Interpretation	3	1	4
13. Interpretation of School Policy	0	1	1
	168	124	292

Analysis:

1. Educational planning, transfer, academic (classes and study), grades and vocational choice and/or goals are the problems most discussed with Riverside City College Counselors indicating, perhaps, that the student's image of the counselor is in the school setting.

2. That a greater percentage of upperclassmen would discuss educational plans and transfer problems with counselors is probably due to the fact that transfer is a more imminent problem among sophomores since very few students are qualified to transfer out of the junior college at the end of their freshman year.

Question #4 - Problems students would probably not want to take to a counselor for discussion.

Problem	Freshmen	Upperclassmen	Totals
1. Personal-Social	62	38	100
2. Family	41	18	59
3. Concerning classes and study	22	8	30
4. Financial	14	5	19
5. Instructor-student relationships	9	11	20
6. Emotional	4	6	10
7. Student Conduct (drinking, etc.)	3	4	7
8. Religions	3	0	3
9. Grades and Grading System	3	6	9
10. Test Results (self appraisal)	2	0	2
11. Vocational	1	2	3
12. Attitude toward school	1	1	2
13. Transfer	0	1	1
14. "Problems of no concern to the counselor."	0	1	1
	165	91	256

Analysis:

1. Clearly students do notsee family, personal-social, or emotional problems within the realm of the school counselor to solve although proportionately fewer sophomores would hesitate to discuss family or financial problems than freshmen. I would tend to believe that the latter is due to increased publicity at Riverside City College concerning scholarships, N.D.E.A. assistance, etc.; however, it could be that those with the greatest financial problems did not return for the spring semester.

2. There seems to be a significant number of students who would not take academic problems to counselors for discussion to warrent further study here.

3. The 20 instances of student-instructor conflict that appear might indicate that instructors need to "apply the human equation" more generally.

4. The fact that student conduct (drinking, Etc.) among both freshmen and upperclassmen entered the picture world seem to indicate that there is some concern here--that perhaps students would like to talk with someone <u>other</u> than their parents about this problem.

5. Students tend to be more critical of the grading system and more conscious of grades the nearer they get to graduation or transfer.

Questions #3 and #4

	Freshmen	Upperclassmen
Problems students would discuss	168	124
Problems students would not discuss	165	91

Analysis:

While the problems freshmen would or would not discuss with counselors remained approximately the same, there seems to be a significant drop in the number of problems upperclassmen would not discuss with counselors.

<u>Conclusions</u>

1. Student reactions to counseling appear to be about the same among freshman or upperclassmen at Riverside City College.

2. Student reasons for not discussing problems with counselors might indicate a lack of good communication on the part of counselors as to their specific functions and the areas in which they can be of help. The student needs to be more aware that the counselor cannot <u>solve</u> all problems -- either academic or personal -- but that the counselor's function is to discuss the

problem with the student and, if it can't be resolved at the time, indicate where help can be obtained.

3. A sufficient number of students indicated a concern over their ability to do college work to warrant a closer look at what we are doing for the student who feels insecure in the college setting. Could we devise a better means of reaching and building confidence in these men and women before it is too late? Frank Bowles, president of College Entrance Examination Board, in his generalizations about junior colleges says:

> "Since these colleges are not selective (neither keeping students out or forcing them out), they must operate so that students will make their own decisions, and thus they must have a strong institutional emphasis on guidance."[1]

4. As counselors we need to be more cognizant of the feelings of our counselees -- to give them the feeling that we are not rushed and that theirs is the problem we are concerned with. By improving our counseling techniques, we can do a better job of communicating this feeling, and thus build the "mutual affection and confidence[2] so important to the counseling relationship.

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[1] Frank Bowles, "Who Gets Into College?" Alumni Bulletin, Sycoming College, April, 1962.

[2] Albert Schweitzer

ADDENDUM

Because I was curious as to whether our students actually came for the kinds of counseling they had indicated on the survey, I obtained the following information from my last semester's counseling appointment slips.

Counseling Interviews - Fall Semester, 1961-2 (Sensor)

Purpose	Number of Students Interviewed
Semester Programing	126
Psych 49 (Orientation Class-interview on study habits, attitudes, academic problems)	112
Drop and Add	62
Probation	30
Transfer Information	23
Occupational Help	14
Other (Not specified)	10
Personal - Social	9
Study Problem	4
Change of Major	3
	393

These indicate actual appointments made through the counseling secretary whereas many students who come in during open counseling hours would not be included in this table and though I do not have evidence of it, I have observed that many who do not make regular counseling appointments want to discuss pressing problems of a personal nature. The table, however, would indicate that the results of the survey of student reactions are similar to the pattern of actual performance.

To the student:

By answering the questions below you would be very helpful to school leaders who are studying and trying to improve the college program. Be very frank and give as complete a statement as possible.

Do not sign your name. We are interested only in your ideas. This form is being filled out by a large number of students in different classes.

1. Within the last year or two, have you thought about going to a school counselor to get help on any kind of a question or problem, and then decided not to do it after all?

Check one: Yes _____ No _____

2. If your answer above is "yes" (that is, you thought about seeing a counselor and decided not to), please tell, as fully as possible, what the question or problem was, and why you hesitated to contact the counselor, what held you back, etc., whatever the reasons were.

This was the question or problem I thought about taking to the counselor:

This is why I decided not to see a counselor about it:

3. List two questions or problems that you think students your age would ordinarily not hesitate to talk about with a school counselor.

a. _____

b. _____

4. Now list two questions or problems which most students you know would probably not want to take to a counselor for discussion.

a. _____

b. _____

Thank you for your ccoperation in filling out the form